

From: "clifford-lundin@nj.nacdnet.org%inter2" <clifford-lundin@nj.nacdnet.org>
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Email: clifford-lundin@nj.nacdnet.org

FirstName: Clifford

LastName: Lundin

Address1: 378 Maxim Drive

Address2:

City: Andover

State: New Jersey

zipcode: 07821

Question1:

Question2:

Question3:

Question4: See Comments below from Session on 11/16/05

NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

P.O. Box 330

Trenton, NJ 08625-0330

STATEMENT OF CLIFFORD R. LUNDIN

U.S.D.A. LISTENING SESSION

EAST BRUNSWICK, NJ

NOVEMBER 16, 2005

Good Morning Mr. Under Secretary. My name is Clifford R. Lundin. I live in Hopatcong, NJ and I am the Chairman of the Sussex County Soil Conservation District and a member of the State Soil Conservation Committee. I am also the immediate past President of the New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts. On behalf of New Jersey's 15 Soil Conservation Districts and 75 Soil Conservation District supervisors, I welcome you to New Jersey and thank you for this opportunity to comment. I will address my comments to the "conservation and environmental goals" section of your questions.

New Jersey's Conservation Districts are primarily involved with the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill. The Conservation Partnership in New Jersey is strong and healthy. We enjoy an excellent close working relationship with the NRCS of your agency and our state partner. We would offer the following thoughts for the future:

1) Farm Bill Programs. We have generally pleased with the 2002 amendments to the Farm Bill. We have actively utilized the various programs under the conservation title especially EQIP, FRPP and WHIP. NJ has state programs that parallel the EQIP and FRRP. We have effectively combined the federal and state funds to maximize the benefits to our citizens and our environment. A backlog of applications remains. We encourage the continuation and expansion of funding for the various programs. Additional NRCS Technical Assistance is needed to reduce the design time from contract award to full implementation.

2) Regional Equity. We strongly support and urge the continuation of the Regional Equity Provision contained in the 2002 Farm Bill. That provision has ensured that all states and regions receive their fair share of Farm Bill appropriations.

3) Conservation Security Program. We are encouraged by the pilot program to date. We would urge the USDA to fully implement the CSP on a national

basis.

4) CREP Program. The NJ CREP program has been initiated through FAS. We support the continuation and expansion of this program.

5) Conservation Technical Assistance. With the 2002 Farm Bill, we have seen a shift in NRCS resources away from the traditional Conservation Technical Assistance programs toward the various specific Farm Bill programs. This is one negative aspect of the 2002 Farm Bill. We believe that proper planning is critical and essential to soil and environmental health. In its efforts to meet Farm Bill programmatic goals, USDA should not ignore or overlook the traditional Farm Planning activities. Farm Conservation Plans are essential for proper soil and nutrient management. The trust and communication that develops from involvement in the CTA program can and should be the starting point for a farmer's entry into the various other Farm Bill programs. The CTA program can and should address the needs of new farmers and small farmers. We would urge the USDA to regard the various Farm Bill programs as part of a Menu or toolkit of possible areas of assistance efforts. Instead of emphasizing the various programs, an effective CTA program would help farmers choose the best menu options available to them. We therefore urge the dedication of additional NRCS resources to expanded conservation assistance, particularly for small farmers and for preserved lands.

6) Urban Conservation. Mr. Under Secretary, the sign behind you is wrong. The sign reads: "USDA-Listening to Rural America." Mr. Under Secretary, the USDA must listen to and serve the needs of all of America: rural, suburban and urban. Natural resource information is of critical importance to proper land use, both on the farm and in developing, interface and fringe areas. NRCS resources should be made available, at the invitation of the state and/or local community officials, to aid in proper natural resource management decisions. The suburban and urban community must be educated to the critical importance of agricultural to our country. Efforts should be directed toward addressing issues resolving disputes between agriculture and suburban residents in the interface areas. Agriculture in those areas must use the best management practices. New Jersey has a long and successful history of involvement in NRCS community conservation pilot programs including the Urban Community Action Program. We urge the establishment of a new Farm Bill program directed toward urban and community conservation efforts.

7) Resource Conservation and Development Programs (RC&D). NJ currently has two very successful RC&D programs. We would urge continued funding and expansion of the program, particularly into urban areas. An application is currently pending to establish the Liberty RC&D program to service NJ's urban areas. We urge favorable consideration of that application.

8) Plant Materials Centers. In New Jersey, we are proud of the pioneering work performed at the USDA Plant Materials Center in Cape May. We urge continued support and funding in the Farm Bill for the Plant Material Center Program.

Finally, we urge USDA to continue to rely on the local delivery system of the nation's 3000 conservation districts. We look forward to a successful continuing partnership in the coming years.

We thank you for listening.

Question5:
Question6: